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ABSTRACT

This KIDS COUNT report examines trends in the well-being of Vermont's youth. The report balances at-risk youth data with survey results related to "positive youth development," an approach that promotes beneficial attributes of youth and their communities. Following an introduction and discussion of positive youth development and youth well-being in context, a statistical portrait of Vermont's youth by school district is presented based on 15 indicators encompassing both developmental assets and risk behaviors. The positive indicators are: (1) other adult relationships; (2) community values youth; (3) adult role models; (4) youth programs; (5) school engagement; (6) responsibility; (7) interpersonal competence; (8) self-esteem; and (9) parents talk about school. The negative indicators are: (1) tobacco use; (2) alcohol use; (3) inhalant use; (4) sexual activity; (5) estimated graduation rate; and (6) involvement with the juvenile justice system. The report asserts that most of Vermont's young people are engaged in learning, involved in youth programs, able to understand their responsibilities, and have parents who ask them about school. Most do not smoke, use inhalants to get high, or get in trouble with the law. Often, they attain these assets without having adult role models and while not feeling valued by their communities. The report concludes with notes on statistics and methodology. (EV)

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YOUTH COUNT

The Vermont Youth Report

PS 030715

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Errata

On page 3, the second paragraph on the right, third sentence should read:

> Far more *sixth-graders* felt valued by their communities than did seniors -- 37 percent compared to 17 percent.

On page 29, the fifth paragraph down should read:

> Less than 50 percent of eighth and twelfth-graders reported having "interpersonal competency" and "other responsible adults" in their lives, and slightly over 50 percent of young *men* and less than 50 percent of young *women* reported having a sense of self-esteem.

On pages 34 and 35, the year in the heading should be *1999*, not 1998.

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Credits

Data Collection and Analysis
Beth Burgess, Carlen Finn

Writers
Wendy Farber, Beth Burgess

Editor
Beth Burgess

Design
Tim Newcomb, Editing and Design Publication Services

Photographs
Stefan Hard, *Times Argus*
Archival photographs, former students of Carley Stevens-McLaughlin, Montpelier High School
Madeleine Newcomb

YOUTH COUNT
The Vermont Youth Report

A Vermont KIDS COUNT publication, prepared by the Vermont Children's Forum
2002

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INTRODUCTION

"Drug abusers" "Runaways" "Teen mothers" "Dropouts"

Headlines often portray young women and men through a negative lens — judging all youth by the troubled behaviors of some. This emphasis on at-risk teens has contributed to a piecemeal approach to public policies and programs for this entire age group. It encourages the labeling of young people on the basis of their behaviors, instead of recognizing and enhancing their strengths as individuals. The result has been the proliferation of problem-based programs, with too few resources assigned to support healthy development.

> *[T]his approach has divided young people into two groups, those exhibiting problems or at high risk for problems and everyone else; and instead of providing* ***more*** *developmental supports for youth at higher risk, our narrow focus on isolated problems has led us to provide* ***different*** *supports for this group.*[1]
>
> — Community Network for Youth Development

What is needed is a comprehensive youth policy that recognizes how these problems are interrelated and goes beyond treating symptoms to meeting the developmental needs of all youth. Unfortunately, the emphasis on at-risk teens is perpetuated even in the statistics that measure teen well-being. That is because the kinds of data collected focus mostly on what is not working in society, such as reporting the number of delinquents, drug abusers, and dropouts.

While these conventional data are essential for revealing who needs help, they only show a partial reality. They cannot show us the positive contributions of young people — those who volunteer to clean up rivers, earn wages to help meet family expenses, or tutor younger students — those who are vital members of their towns and neighborhoods.

So, how do we put together a more accurate picture of youth? One way is to broaden the kinds of questions we ask. This *Vermont Youth Report* attempts to do that by balancing at-risk youth data with survey results related to "positive youth development," an approach that promotes beneficial attributes of youth and their communities. These statistics shift the emphasis away from "What's wrong with youth" to "What are we doing right for kids, as caregivers and community members?" and "What do we need to improve?" While both barometers of well-being are imperfect tools, when presented together, they can help provide direction for constructive action.

How well do we provide our youth with the supports they need to meet the challenges of life? The outcomes in Vermont, similar to national findings, are sobering. For example, most students do not feel valued by their communities, especially by their senior year. Far more eighth-graders felt valued by their communities than did seniors — 37 percent compared to 17 percent. On the other hand, most Vermont students — 62 percent — felt engaged in school, which means they were interested in learning and prepared for classes.

In this report, in addition to reporting on how students are faring, we make the case that youth issues should be seen in context — of mixed messages from adults and of economic issues such as poverty. Poverty is one of the greatest risk factors to youth well-being.

Youth issues are increasingly complex and related public policy must address the whole picture, not the "flavor-of-the-month" solution promoted in 60-second sound bites. This youth report doesn't promise answers, but seeks to enlarge the discussion, looking at young people and adults as equal in value to society. After all, as a society, we *are* how we treat our children.

Positive Youth Development

Positive youth development is based on defining a community *not* by how many problems it has or that its young people exhibit, but on the depth and quality of its overall environment and support for young people. It places the responsibility with *all* adults in a community to make a difference in the lives of youth.

Why Positive Youth Development?

Practitioners who analyze youth programs discovered several years ago that something was missing in youth policies. They found that preventing and treating problems, while essential to well-being, did not necessarily help prepare young people to meet the challenges of adolescence. As national youth researcher, Karen Pittman, notes, "Being problem-free does not mean youth are fully prepared for adulthood."

Taking a different tack, researchers took a closer look at some extraordinary at-risk youth. Where previous studies had examined family and environmental factors that promote risk-taking behaviors, these researchers looked at the reverse — the common factors that enable some young people to succeed despite such odds as neglectful parents, unsafe neighborhoods, and exposure to drugs and alcohol.

They found that these "resilient" youth did have similar inner strengths and external support systems in common. These beneficial conditions and influences enabled these young people to become healthy, competent adults.

Using the results of this research, a broader approach to youth policy emerged, known as positive youth development. This strategy focuses on building up and reinforcing these positive strengths in all young people, at every level of their lives — in their neighborhoods, at home, in the classroom, playing field, youth center, local businesses, and government.

> *This approach emphasizes the importance of understanding adolescents' perceptions and views in research — moving from a deficit view of adolescents as 'problems' in developing programs — and the genuine involvement of adolescents in the planning and implementation of programs.*[2]

The positive youth development approach prepares, guides, and supports young people in meeting the challenges of adolescence and adulthood by involving them in program planning.

How is Positive Youth Development Different from Other Approaches?

Broader Focus

This strategy has helped broaden youth policy and programming, complementing traditional prevention and treatment-based efforts. All youth are the target of positive youth development efforts, not just "at-risk" youth, in keeping with the need to fully prepare all youth for adulthood.

To translate its goals into action, the positive youth development model transforms conventional messages about youth. It places responsibility for the well-being of all youth with the entire community.

Community Responsibility

To translate its goals into action, the positive youth development model transforms conventional messages about youth. It places responsibility for the well-being of all youth with the entire community. Instead of blaming youth problems on teens, families, schools, government, or society, it enlists the support of all community members to be part of a teen's support network.

Community and Youth-Focused

Instead of leaving youth policy to outside experts, policy makers, and professionals, the focus of positive youth development is on local people — their needs, ideas, and resources. It bases planning and implementation on the input and resources of local citizens, including youth.

This local perspective brings more inclusiveness — and, in return, more of a sense of "ownership"— to youth programs. For example, at the Hardwick Area Patch, a partnership of many area agencies, the emphasis is to involve all townspeople in setting up positive community structures.

> *We're trying to give folks at the community level a voice . . . I believe you have to address problems by building on local strengths as much as possible. If you just focus on deficits, you're not allowing the community to do what it naturally wants to do, which is to be a supportive environment for children, families and citizens.*[3]

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Youth Well-Being in Context

Developmental Needs of Youth

Human development is a complex process that presents a different set of transitions with each new stage of life. During adolescence — which begins as early as age nine — young people experience changes to their bodies and emotions, shifts of interpersonal relationships, and a maturing of their mental capabilities. At the same time, young people face greater expectations from their parents, adjustments to middle school (or junior high school), and new roles in their communities.

Early adolescence is one of the most significant periods of development, affecting boys and girls in different ways, beyond just the obvious physical changes. For example, as girls mature into teens, they can be at greater risk for depression, partly because of greater social pressures.

> *Specifically, young adolescent girls face an increased risk of sexual abuse and intensified expectations to conform to restrictive social roles." [And, for both girls and boys] ". . . different biological changes . . . create changing expectations for both parents and peers with respect to gender roles and educational achievement, which can affect the young person's choices and possibilities for certain career pathways.*[4]

Social and Cultural Context

The adolescent years can take on more of an edge for those students who may confront new reactions from their peers to individual differences. Youth development efforts need to be respectful and inclusive of all students — including those who are more likely to be harassed or feel isolated because of their economic status, ethnic group or race, sexual orientation, religion, or culture.

Economic Security

As much as youth well-being is influenced by internal biological and emotional changes, and home and community supports, it also can be influenced by a society's structural factors, such as poverty. According to the Children's Defense Fund, poverty is one of the greatest risks to young people's overall health status.

> *Each year spent in poverty while growing up significantly worsens the risk that a child will fall behind in grade level by age 18, when other factors are held constant...*[5]

> *The most consistent, and typically the most powerful predictor of adolescent success and well-being, is family income. Adolescents growing up in families experiencing economic hardship are at high risk for health and behavioral problems, for school failure, and for becoming involved in criminal activities.*[6]

Lack of money itself does not *cause* kids to drop out or try drugs. It is not simply the lack of resources, but the repercussions caused by them, that can add up to multiple family problems. For example, young people whose families are unable to afford adequate housing or nutritious food are more likely to become sick and therefore miss school more often than their higher-income peers. Without adequate meals, they also may be less able to focus on school work. And, they may absorb the emotional stress they see their parents experience in dealing with economic struggles.

Rural environments can make it harder to "make do" — jobs are scarcer and are at greater distances, and services, public transportation, and youth resources are more limited. For this reason, comprehensive community development must include local anti-poverty strategies along with positive youth development.

Meeting the Developmental Needs of All Youth

To successfully meet the challenges of adolescence, certain physical, emotional, social and other developmental needs must be met. These include:

- A sense of structure and a clear understanding of rules and limits, for safety and stability;
- A sense that that they belong and are valuable members of their families, schools and communities, regardless of their circumstances, individual differences, and beliefs;
- A strong sense of self-worth and positive identity;
- A feeling of responsibility and control over their lives as they gain autonomy and explore their growing independence; and
- Involvement in opportunities to achieve competence and receive personal recognition.

Stefan Hard photo, Times Argus 2002.

6

Balancing Positive Youth Development with Other Efforts

Historically, youth policies and government funding for programs emphasized problems such as substance abuse, teen pregnancy, and school failure. Positive youth development takes a different approach, one that can complement these existing efforts, by creating supports for all teens. It may be tempting to overlook the contributions of the traditional programs because they have placed the focus on troubled youth. Yet, it is important to maintain successful intervention and prevention programs.

For that reason, youth policy experts caution against taking an "all or nothing" strategy in implementing the ideas of positive youth development. Sue Mahoney, then-planning specialist for the Vermont Department of Education, made that point in a 1997 newsletter:

> *One thing I have heard many people say is that they no longer want to spend their time and energy focusing on risk factors or other problems that are taking root in their communities." Mahoney, who organized the Vermont Resiliency Network, added, "I understand the desire to take a strengths-only approach, but in reality I believe we must do both. We need to take advantage of [government funding and problem-based services] . . . while we work toward a systematic, strength-based approach. . . . Communities need people who are focused on reducing the risk as much as they need those who choose to advocate for a more positive approach.*[7]
>
> - Fall 1997 Resiliency Report

Public policy efforts to help young people through the challenges they face must embrace a wide spectrum of approaches. Teens and pre-teens need the integrated community, school, and family supports that positive youth development espouses. Yet, some teens also need intervention programs. Like troubled adults, they need access to substance abuse treatment, mental health care, and temporary shelter, among other services.

PROFILES OF YOUTH WELL-BEING

Measuring Youth Well-Being Using Developmental Assets

The Minnesota-based Search Institute has developed a method of measuring the kinds of "experiences, values, and behaviors that support healthy youth development." Based on extensive research, it identified 40 key elements, calling them "developmental assets."

> *We chose this term because the things we identified -- building blocks for human development — act like assets in a young person's life. They increase in value over time. They provide a sense of security. They are resources upon which a child can draw again and again.*[8]

The Search Institute categorizes these 40 assets into a "Framework of Developmental Assets" divided into external and internal assets. The Framework of Developmental Assets operates under the same concept of a positive youth development approach: focusing on *all* youth and concentrating on the strengths, values, and skills that youth possess.

The Search Institute defines **External Assets** as the networks of support, opportunities, and people that help foster positive development in teens. These assets are grouped into four categories:

- Support
- Empowerment
- Boundaries and Expectations
- Constructive Use of Time

Internal Assets are "the commitments, values and competencies" that help young people make wise and responsible decisions, and create a positive identity and sense of purpose. Internal assets also are grouped into four categories:

- Commitment to Learning
- Positive Values
- Social Competencies
- Positive Identity

The more "assets" a young man or woman has, the more likely he or she will be curious about learning, want to finish high school, contribute to their community, and be engaged in satisfying activities and social lives.

Conversely, the fewer assets a youth possesses, the greater the chance she or he will engage in patterns of risky behavior and poor decision-making. The results of having too few developmental assets can be seen in poor health outcomes related to habitual tobacco, alcohol, and drug use; early sexual activity; vandalism and other illegal acts; and school failure. Any one of these problems can have profound implications for a teen's future.

Search Institute Survey of Vermont Youth

The Search Institute has developed surveys to measure the health and well-being of youth as portrayed by the number of developmental assets students possess. Community members can use the results to work toward engaging their institutions — schools, youth groups, civic organizations — in the tasks of building up youth assets. As with positive youth development, "Asset building is not a program — it is a catalyst for connecting and empowering all sectors of [a] community."[9]

A sampling of Search Institute survey results from Vermont is presented in this report. The survey, *Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors*, was conducted with 10,816 Vermont youth grades six through twelve between December 1997 and February 1998. Students in eighty-five schools participated.

Reading the Results

The Search Institute notes that results that show a five percent or greater difference between grade levels or genders can be interpreted as "significant and meaningful." It also advises readers to look at the larger picture —"the patterns of findings rather than … focus on a specific asset or finding, for example, does one grade or set of grades consistently report fewer assets?"[10]

This report includes results for only eight of the forty assets. For more information on the results of the entire survey, contact your local supervisory union or the Planning Office of the Vermont Agency for Human Services, (802) 241-2227.

Keeping a Realistic Perspective on Youth Behavior

Developmental assets can serve as a guide to measure youth and community strengths. They should not be used, however, to set impossible standards for youth that adults could not hope to achieve. Youth policies that expect to eliminate any risk behaviors will be unrealistic, if not impossible, to achieve. After all, teenagers absorb a continuous barrage of media and other messages that celebrate excess, yet at the same time, they are forbidden to "learn by doing" adult behaviors.

Mike Males, a Justice Policy Institute researcher, offered this acerbic assessment in his *Youth Today* opinion column: "America's ultimate prevention goal is that no teenager ever have sex, drink alcohol, witness explicit media, enjoy free time not rigidly structured and supervised by adults, or get access to any dangerous item. In effect, major institutions propose abolishing adolescence and creating a delayed, abrupt transition from total-abstinence childhood to anything-goes adulthood."[11]

Better to try out adult behaviors while teenagers are still under the guidance of adults, Males suggests, than to see them plunge into adulthood with no preparation and less adult oversight. A normal part of adolescence can include pushing the limits — some minor involvement in risky behaviors.

In fact, some researchers see this temporary resistance to norms "as an essential component of a healthful adolescent experience and even as contributing to optimum development."[12] Often these behaviors represent "the natural process of separating from parents and establishing an identity."[13]

External Assets
State by Grade

Grade	Other Adult Relationships	Community Values Youth	Adult Role Models	Youth Programs
6th Grade	44%	37%	36%	59%
7th Grade	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
8th Grade	44%	23%	30%	64%
9th Grade	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
10th Grade	44%	15%	23%	58%
11th Grade	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
12th Grade	49%	17%	24%	61%

Internal Assets
State by Grade

Grade	School Engagement	Responsibility	Interpersonal Competence	Self-esteem
6th Grade	65%	65%	51%	52%
7th Grade	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
8th Grade	61%	55%	44%	45%
9th Grade	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
10th Grade	60%	54%	42%	45%
11th Grade	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
12th Grade	64%	64%	46%	52%

External Developmental Assets

Support

Asset: **Other Adult Relationships**

Kids need a wide spectrum of support not only from their parents but also from other positive, trustworthy adults. The support of caring adults who spend time with and listen to youth can help young people learn about responsibility and respect as well as gain confidence. Slightly less than half of all students surveyed reported having two or more adults in their lives with whom they looked forward to spending time, and who gave them encouragement and spoke with them at least once a month. More high school seniors than other students reported such relationships.

Empowerment

Asset: **Community Values Youth**

This asset measures how well students feel the adults in their community value them. When communities have a culture of respecting all citizens, regardless of age, they strengthen young people's feelings of belonging. These youth, in turn, are more likely to make positive contributions to the community. In Vermont, the percent of adolescents who feel valued by their communities drops steadily from sixth grade to twelfth grade. Eighty-three percent of high school seniors in Vermont feel disconnected from their communities, compared to 77 percent of eighth-graders, and 63 percent of sixth-graders.

Boundaries and Expectations

Asset: **Adult Role Models**

Adult Role Models provide young people with opportunities to learn responsible behaviors and understand limits. By their actions, these adults also demonstrate positive community involvement by taking the time to help others. In Vermont, fewer than 50 percent of students surveyed felt they had role models, but the results varied by age and gender. Fewer older students reported having role models — 36 percent of sixth-grade students compared to 24 percent of twelfth-graders — as did boys of all ages, 25 percent versus 31 percent of girls.

Constructive Use of Time

Asset: **Participation in Youth Programs**

Participation in Youth Programs, both in and out of school, can provide young people with a safe and structured use of time, an outlet for creative self-expression, and a sense of independence. Traditionally, youth programs have focused on the developmental and socialization needs of young people. These needs include opportunities for recreation, educational remediation and enrichment, community service, and personal growth. Of Vermont youth surveyed, 61 percent reported involvement in a sports team; about half participated in at least one school club or organization outside of sports; and 26 percent participated in a club or group outside of school.

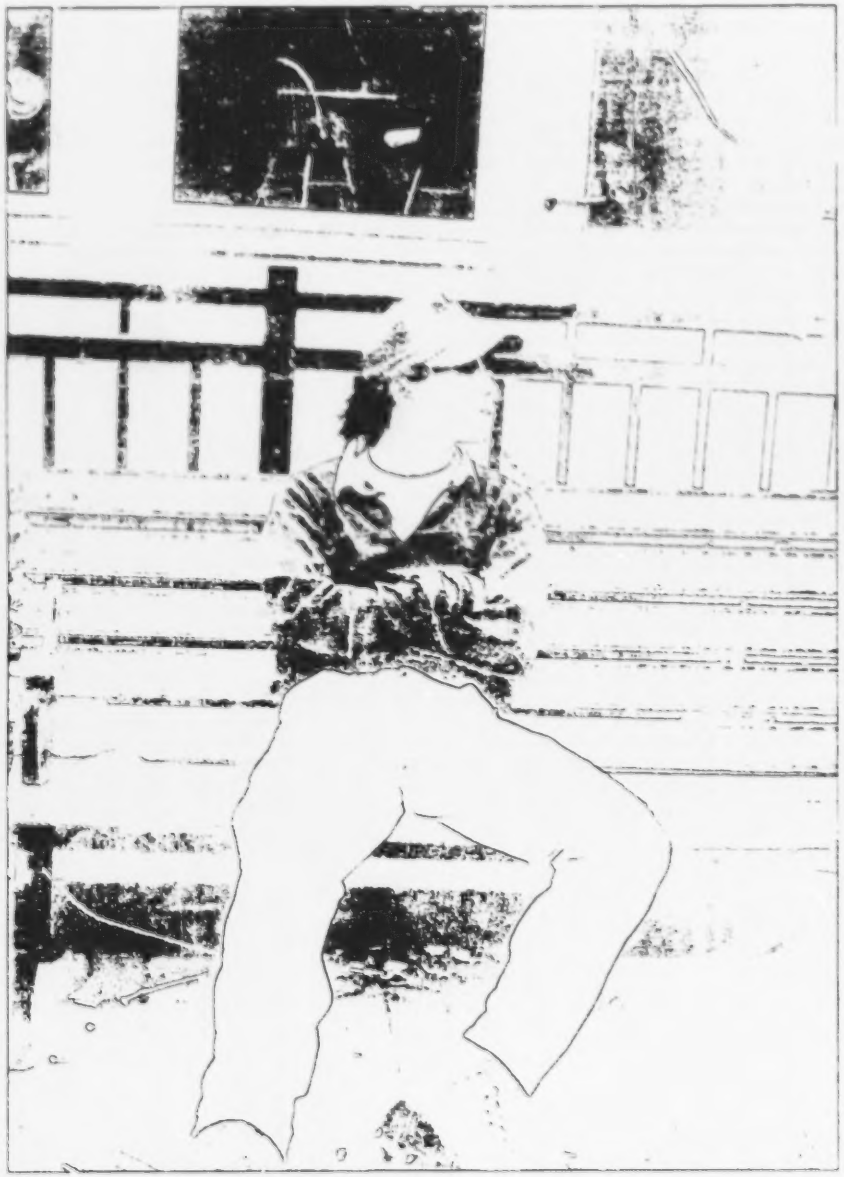
External Developmental Assets

Supervisory Union by Grade, Percent of Students Reporting Each Asset

Supervisory Union (SU) / School District (SD)	Other Adult Relationships	Community Values Youth	Adult Role Models	Youth Programs
Battenkill Valley SU, 8th grade	48	18	32	71
Battenkill Valley SU, 12th grade	NA	NA	NA	NA
Bennington-Rutland SU, 8th grade	52	28	30	80
Bennington-Rutland SU, 12th grade	59	19	24	65
Caledonia North SU, 8th grade	41	29	27	68
Caledonia North SU, 12th grade	53	21	16	48
Chittenden East SU, 8th grade	41	25	35	61
Chittenden East SU, 12th grade	55	17	29	58
Chittenden Central SU, 8th grade	45	15	27	70
Chittenden Central SU, 12th grade	47	19	25	61
Chittenden South SU, 8th grade	55	25	30	75
Chittenden South SU, 12th grade	52	22	30	69
Colchester School District, 8th grade	40	24	31	58
Colchester School District, 12th grade	39	14	29	67
Dresden School District #22, 8th grade	50	24	37	73
Dresden School District #22, 12th grade	56	22	36	81
Essex North SU, 8th grade	39	29	19	49
Essex North SU, 12th grade	41	22	26	46
Esx Twn Schl District, 8th grade	46	26	33	65
Essex Town SD, 12th grade	NA	NA	NA	NA
Franklin Central SU, 8th grade	51	31	25	69
Franklin Central SU, 12th grade	52	19	20	53
Franklin Northwest SU, 8th grde	45	29	28	53
Franklin Northwest SU, 12th grade	38	16	22	38
Franklin West SU, 8th grade	4	12	20	48
Franklin West SU, 12th grade	NA	NA	NA	NA
Grand Isle SU, 8th grade	37	19	25	72
Grand Isle SU, 12th grade	NA	NA	NA	NA
Lamoille South SU, 8th grade	48	31	33	65
Lamoille South SU, 12th grade	48	15	23	62
Milton School District, 8th grade	41	12	22	58
Milton School District, 12th grade	35	9	22	46
Montpelier School District, 8th grade	53	20	39	65
Montpelier School District, 12th grade	51	13	36	70
Orleans-Essex North SU, 8th grade	33	10	26	80
Orleans-Essex North SU, 12th grade	NA	NA	NA	NA
Rutland Central SU, 8th grade	44	27	32	69
Rutland Central SU, 12th grade	57	24	19	70
Rutland City School District, 8th grd	41	26	35	59
Rutland City School District, 12th grd	46	10	18	68
Rutland Northeast SU, 8th grade	41	14	22	55
Rutland Northeast SU, 12th grade	NA	NA	NA	NA
Rutland South SU, 8th grade	36	18	27	52
Rutland South SU, 12th grade	49	16	26	66
Rutland Southwest SU, 8th grade	47	20	21	67
Rutland Southwest SU, 12th grade	NA	NA	NA	NA
St. Johnsbury School District, 8th grd	NA	NA	NA	NA
St. Johnsbury School District, 12th grd	NA	NA	NA	NA
South Burlington SD 8th grade	NA	NA	NA	NA
South Burlington SD, 12th grade	50	16	31	65
Southwest Vermont SU, 8th grade	NA	NA	NA	NA
Southwest Vermont SU, 12th grade	NA	NA	NA	NA
Washington Northeast SU, 8th grade	44	19	31	57
Washington Northeast SU, 12th grade	51	8	24	67
Washington West SU, 8th grade	46	23	28	62
Washington West SU, 12th grade	56	20	13	68
Windham Central SU, 8th grade	39	13	22	60
Windham Central SU, 12th grade	NA	NA	NA	NA
Windham Northeast SU, 8th grade	48	18	35	66
Windham Northeast SU, 12th grade	40	21	27	72
Windham Southeast SU, 8th grade	49	21	29	60
Windham Southeast SU, 12th grade	51	19	23	57
Windsor Northwest SU, 8th grade	42	33	32	49
Windsor Northwest SU, 12th grade	53	24	15	65
Windsor Southwest SU, 8th grade	53	15	31	57
Windsor Southwest SU, 12th grade	52	10	15	54
Vermont, 8th grade	44	23	30	64
Vermont,12th grade	49	17	24	61

NA: School District or Supervisory Union did not participate in survey.

Search Institute, 1998



Internal Developmental Assets

Commitment to Learning

Asset: **School Engagement**

School Engagement is defined as coming to school with interest and curiosity and prepared for classes. Today's job market requires increased literacy, academic, and technical skills, plus the ability to be a life-long learner. Of Vermont students surveyed, 62 percent reported feeling engaged in school. Lack of educational success can reflect a young person's sense of despair about their future opportunities. Research shows that students who feel involved in school are less likely to develop problems with substance abuse than are those who do not feel engaged in learning.[14]

Positive Values

Asset: **Responsibility**

"Responsibility" is one of six assets the Search Institute includes as "Positive Values" that serve as "'external compasses' to guide young people's priorities and choices."[15] This asset refers to living up to commitments as well as taking responsibility for mistakes and other actions. Youth with this asset are more likely to make healthy choices, avoid high-risk behavior, and be able to care for others. Approximately 65 percent of sixth and twelfth graders and 55 percent of eighth and tenth graders surveyed valued this asset.

Social Competencies

Asset: **Interpersonal competence**

This asset measures students' impressions of their social skills related to making and keeping friends, and their ability to develop a sense of con.passion towards others. Young people with a sense of interpersonal competence are better able to develop and maintain peer support systems. Of Vermont youth surveyed, 45 percent reported a sense of interpersonal competence. Boys and girls view their level of these social skills very differently. Significantly, only 29 percent of boys reported a sense of interpersonal competence, compared to 60 percent of girls.

Positive Identity

Asset: **Self-Esteem**

Self-Esteem is a glimpse into a young person's view of himself or herself. This asset contributes to feelings of confidence, belief in self and one's future, and creative self-expression. Fewer than 50 percent of all students surveyed reported possessing self-esteem. The gender differences are fairly notable here — 54 percent of boys reported having self-esteem, compared to 42 percent of girls.

Internal Developmental Assets

Supervisory Union by Grade, Percent of Students Reporting Each Asset

Supervisory Union (SU) / School District (SD)	School Engagement	Responsibility	Interpersonal Competence	Self-esteem
Battenkill Valley SU, 8th grade	68	52	45	42
Battenkill Valley SU, 12th grade	NA	NA	NA	NA
Bennington-Rutland SU, 8th grade	70	70	49	59
Bennington-Rutland SU, 12th grade	61	61	46	60
Caledonia North SU, 8th grade	64	58	39	41
Caledonia North SU, 12th grade	77	69	41	50
Chittenden East SU, 8th grade	66	51	41	47
Chittenden East SU, 12th grade	63	71	51	53
Chittenden Central SU, 8th grade	62	57	42	42
Chittenden Central SU, 12th grade	66	70	49	55
Chittenden South SU, 8th grade	60	51	54	42
Chittenden South SU, 12th grade	64	67	55	57
Colchester School District, 8th grade	59	66	46	49
Colchester School District, 12th grade	61	56	55	49
Dresden School District #22, 8th grade	59	54	47	46
Dresden School District #22, 12th grade	60	67	52	66
Essex North SU, 8th grade	64	67	49	47
Essex North SU, 12th grade	68	63	45	44
Essex Town School District, 8th grade	60	55	43	46
Essex Town School District, 12th grade	NA	NA	NA	NA
Franklin Central SU, 8th grade	59	52	51	49
Franklin Central SU, 12th grade	67	68	44	54
Franklin Northwest SU, 8th grade	59	61	40	50
Franklin Northwest SU, 12th grade	58	65	41	49
Franklin West SU, 8th grade	57	47	30	40
Franklin West SU, 12th grade	NA	NA	NA	NA
Grand Isle SU, 8th grade	59	53	28	49
Grand Isle SU, 12th grade	NA	NA	NA	NA
Lamoille South SU, 8th grade	68	62	42	55
Lamoille South SU, 12th grade	66	58	37	54
Milton School District, 8th grade	51	51	54	25
Milton School District, 12th grade	58	58	48	37
Montpelier School District, 8th grade	79	70	64	59
Montpelier School District, 12th grade	59	63	45	42

Supervisory Union/School District	School Engagement	Responsibility	Interpersonal Competence	Self-esteem
Orleans-Essex North SU, 8th grade	58	58	35	50
Orleans-Essex North SU, 12th grade	NA	NA	NA	NA
Rutland Central SU, 8th grade	63	64	45	57
Rutland Central SU, 12th grade	50	66	48	55
Rutland City School District, 8th grade	63	59	51	49
Rutland City School District, 12th grade	53	45	38	46
Rutland Northeast SU, 8th grade	49	51	45	46
Rutland Northeast SU, 12th grade	NA	NA	NA	NA
Rutland South SU, 8th grade	52	53	36	32
Rutland South SU, 12th grade	62	61	55	50
Rutland Southwest SU, 8th grade	60	53	40	31
Rutland Southwest SU, 12th grade	NA	NA	NA	NA
St. Johnsbury School District, 8th grade	NA	NA	NA	NA
St. Johnsbury School District, 12th grade	NA	NA	NA	NA
South Burlington School District, 8th grade	NA	NA	NA	NA
South Burlington School District, 12th grade	70	68	45	59
Southwest Vermont SU, 8th grade	NA	NA	NA	NA
Southwest Vermont SU, 12th grade	NA	NA	NA	NA
Washington Northeast SU, 8th grade	45	38	38	32
Washington Northeast SU, 12th grade	68	54	28	51
Washington West SU, 8th grade	64	49	51	46
Washington West SU, 12th grade	75	71	55	64
Windham Central SU, 8th grade	51	40	30	29
Windham Central SU, 12th grade	NA	NA	NA	NA
Windham Northeast SU, 8th grade	70	55	38	40
Windham Northeast SU, 12th grade	66	74	38	55
Windham Southeast SU, 8th grade	58	56	44	45
Windham Southeast SU, 12th grade	61	68	48	49
Windsor Northwest SU, 8th grade	52	63	34	40
Windsor Northwest SU, 12th grade	59	56	44	56
Windsor Southwest SU, 8th grade	56	41	38	39
Windsor Southwest SU, 12th grade	73	73	49	23
Vermont, 8th grade	61	55	44	45
Vermont, 12th grade	64	64	46	52

NA: School District or Supervisory Union did not participate in survey.

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Parents Talk About School

Parents who are interested and engaged in their children's lives help model enthusiasm in learning and schoolwork. As pre-teens transition from the familiar surroundings and teachers of elementary school to the challenges of middle school — often in a different building and even a different town — parental support is especially important to smooth the inevitable bumps. Young people whose parents show they care about their schooling are more likely to have confidence in school than are those students whose parents show no interest in their education. One indicator of this interest is the measure of how often parents ask their children about school.

The 1999 Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey found the majority of parents do talk about school every week. Seventy-four percent of eighth, tenth and twelfth-graders reported they had conversations with their parents about school at least weekly. Almost 50 percent of parents talk to their kids about school daily and only eight percent of parents never ask about school.

Note: In the following table, Total Rate is based on all grades from 8 to 12, including 9th and 11th grades.

Parents talk about school (weekly or more)

Percent of students whose parents talk with them about school weekly or more often.

Supervisory Union (SU) / School District (SD)	Number Surveyed	8th Grade Rate	10th Grade Rate	12th Grade Rate	Total Rate
Addison Central SU	706	71	80	75	78
Addison Northeast SU	523	66	73	74	71
Addison Northwest SU	348	72	69	72	70
Addison-Rutland SU	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Barre SU	945	70	74	71	73
Battenkill Valley SU	184	76	86	78	81
Bennington-Rutland SU	465	73	75	82	77
Blue Mountain	165	59	54	78	63
Burlington Public Schools	964	71	72	74	72
Caledonia Central SU	1894	70	78	70	74
Caledonia North SU	1894	70	78	70	74
Chittenden Central SU	1412	78	80	78	80
Chittenden East SU	978	70	84	80	78
Chittenden South SD	1237	83	87	73	81
Colchester SD	783	67	87	78	78
Dresden SD	715	82	81	79	81
Essex-Caledonia SU	119	*	56	83	68
Essex-North SU	1894	70	78	70	74
Franklin Central SU	1017	66	74	79	73
Franklin Northeast SU	554	69	67	70	67
Franklin Northwest SU	690	58	64	61	63
Franklin West SU	429	69	66	66	69
Hartford SD	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Lamoille North SU	558	70	71	68	68
Lamoille South SU	587	64	70	86	73
Milton SD	513	70	77	72	71
Montpelier SD	441	71	86	83	79
Orange East SU	416	70	73	76	72
Orange North SU	219	58	64	63	61
Orange Southwest SU	373	62	71	83	68
Orange-Windsor SU	209	72	70	76	73
Orleans Central SU	454	67	66	75	71
Orleans-Essex North SU	284	72	69	64	70
Orleans Southwest SU	1094	71	69	71	69
Rutland Central SU	347	74	69	71	72
Rutland City SD	911	73	79	84	80
Rutland Northeast SU	570	71	72	78	73
Rutland South SU	552	52	72	72	68
Rutland Southwest SU	254	70	63	70	68
Rutland Windsor SU	171	75	56	73	68
South Burlington SD	783	74	78	78	77
Southwest Vermont SU	1282	74	70	72	72
Springfield SD	563	74	75	71	74
St. Johnsbury SD	1894	70	78	70	74
Thetford Academy	264	61	73	78	72
Washington Central SU	540	73	74	76	76
Washington Northeast SU	251	72	76	61	69
Washington South SU	262	75	65	84	71
Washington West SU	600	75	76	79	78
Windham Central SU	275	74	76	66	72
Windham Northeast SU	518	72	75	72	73
Windham Southeast SU	1058	69	75	67	74
Windham Southwest SU	265	69	58	71	69
Windsor Central SU	544	79	85	75	80
Windsor Northwest SU	224	59	67	64	67
Windsor Southeast SU	381	78	75	63	74
Windsor Southwest SU	341	67	76	77	68
Winooski SD	231	72	74	74	75
Vermont	9096	71	77	74	74

*NA: SD or SU did not participate in survey *: Results are not included for grades with fewer than 20 students.*

1999 Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey

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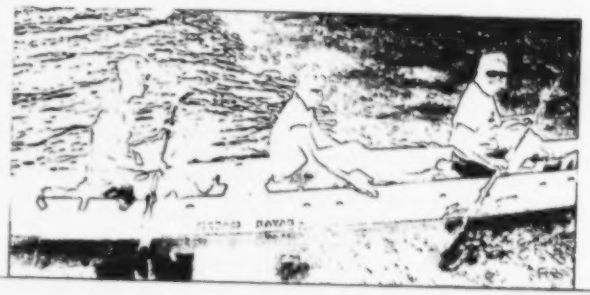

The more "assets" a young man or woman has, the more likely he or she will be curious about learning, want to finish high school, contribute to their community, and be engaged in satisfying activities and social lives.

Conversely, the fewer assets a youth possesses, the greater the chance she or he will engage in patterns of risky behavior and poor decision-making. The results of having too few developmental assets can be seen in poor health outcomes related to habitual tobacco, alcohol, and drug use; early sexual activity; vandalism and other illegal acts; and school failure. Any one of these problems can have profound implications for a teen's future.

PROFILES OF YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR

Young people whose habits and behaviors put them in serious danger of harm make up a very small portion of the youth population. While their numbers are small, the risk-taking activities of these young people signal that not only they, but also their families and communities, need support. From a developmental asset perspective, these youth have too few resources to build up the assets they need to be confident and engaged in their lives.

Most of the at-risk behavior rates in this report are from the Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey (VYRBS), which measures the prevalence of risk-taking behaviors such as substance use, involvement in sexual activity, and measures of resiliency, such as parental involvement in school.

The Department of Health's Office of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Programs and the Department of Education's Comprehensive School Health Program sponsor the VYRBS of middle school and high school students every two years. The at-risk behaviors measured contribute to the leading causes of death, disease, and injury among Vermont young people.

In 1999, over 30,000 eighth- to twelfth-grade students participated in the anonymous, voluntary survey at their schools. The findings are based on a representative sample of 9,096 middle and high school students. (See list of participating schools in Appendix.)

The VYRBS tables in this report provide school district-level results for a range of teen behaviors related to their long term health and welfare. The Vermont Department of Education provided data on dropout rates; information on delinquency is from the Vermont Center for Justice Research and federal sources.

Note: In the following tables, Total Rate is based on all grades from 8 to 12.

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Tobacco Use

Tobacco use is responsible for more than 400,000 deaths a year, making it the leading cause of premature death in the United States. In addition, environmental or second-hand tobacco smoke is associated with an increased risk of respiratory tract infections such as bronchitis and pneumonia and health complications related to childhood asthma. Death and illness resulting from tobacco use are highly preventable.[16]

The decision to start smoking is usually made during adolescence. People who do not smoke as minors are unlikely ever to do so. More than the influence of peers, the most important predictor of youth behavior is the behavior of the adults around them — especially their parents. In the 1999 Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 28 percent of students said they smoked before they turned 13. It is estimated that about 1,100 Vermont high school students begin smoking each year.[17]

Overall, nearly one-third of all students surveyed reported they had smoked at least once within the previous 30 days. While the rate is alarming, it represents a continuing decline: to 31 percent in 1999, from 36 percent in 1997 and 38 percent in 1995. Twenty-two percent of eighth graders surveyed had smoked cigarettes during the 30 days before the survey, compared to 26 percent in 1997. Cigarette smoking is more prevalent among older students. In 1999, 42 percent of Vermont's twelfth graders had smoked during the previous month in 1999, nearly the same percent as in 1997.

A sizable minority of students went beyond an occasional cigarette to develop a regular habit. Over one-fifth of high school seniors smoked regularly (at least one cigarette daily). Overall, 13 percent of students in grades eight through 12 were daily smokers.

Cigarettes (30 days)

Percent of students who had smoked cigarettes during the past 30 days

Supervisory Union (SU) / School District (SD)	Number Surveyed	8th Grade Rate	10th Grade Rate	12th Grade Rate	Total Rate
Addison Central SU	706	24	35	42	32
Addison Northeast SU	523	13	30	55	27
Addison Northwest SU	348	15	28	48	25
Addison-Rutland SU	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Barre SU	945	15	34	43	32
Battenkill Valley SU	184	26	35	39	35
Bennington-Rutland SU	465	12	40	45	32
Blue Mountain	165	28	51	36	45
Burlington Public Schools	964	20	29	49	29
Caledonia Central SU	1894	34	37	49	39
Caledonia North SU	1894	34	37	49	39
Chittenden Central SU	1412	16	32	31	24
Chittenden East SU	978	22	21	34	24
Chittenden South SD	1237	9	19	44	22
Colchester SD	783	23	34	50	33
Dresden SD	715	5	10	30	13
Essex-Caledonia SU	119	*	36	28	41
Essex-North SU	1894	34	37	49	39
Franklin Central SU	1017	21	43	42	38
Franklin Northeast SU	554	26	44	48	37
Franklin Northwest SU	690	25	34	40	35
Franklin West SU	429	27	25	47	33
Hartford SD	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Lamoille North SU	558	22	37	49	33
Lamoille South SU	587	18	34	49	31
Milton SD	513	28	31	33	30
Montpelier SD	441	17	22	25	26
Orange East SU	416	19	35	32	29
Orange North SU	219	33	36	50	38

Supervisory Union/School District	Number Surveyed	8th Grade Rate	10th Grade Rate	12th Grade Rate	Total Rate
Orange Southwest SU	373	29	30	42	33
Orange-Windsor SU	209	21	38	37	28
Orleans Central SU	454	28	24	54	35
Orleans-Essex North SU	284	27	38	21	32
Orleans Southwest SU	1094	20	40	48	37
Rutland Central SU	347	19	48	42	32
Rutland City SD	911	32	34	52	37
Rutland Northeast SU	570	22	43	53	35
Rutland South SU	552	32	36	45	39
Rutland Southwest SU	254	17	55	29	35
Rutland Windsor SU	171	32	38	27	31
South Burlington SD	783	12	28	49	27
Southwest Vermont SU	1282	28	33	35	34
Springfield SD	563	34	26	25	26
St. Johnsbury SD	1894	34	37	49	39
Thetford Academy	264	28	30	46	32
Washington Central SU	540	8	30	33	21
Washington Northeast SU	251	12	30	47	29
Washington South SU	262	22	27	21	28
Washington West SU	600	20	26	33	27
Windham Central SU	275	21	54	59	42
Windham Northeast SU	518	27	30	45	30
Windham Southeast SU	1058	23	31	46	34
Windham Southwest SU	265	25	30	54	34
Windsor Central SU	544	13	32	42	29
Windsor Northwest SU	224	25	32	35	30
Windsor Southeast SU	381	19	35	44	29
Windsor Southwest SU	341	19	38	46	33
Winooski SD	231	14	25	44	26
Vermont	9096	22	33	42	31

*NA: SD or SU did not participate in survey *: Results are not included for grades with fewer than 20 students.*

1999 Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey

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Alcohol Use

Alcohol use, abuse, and dependency are significant public health problems, nationally and in Vermont. Young people who drink face problems with physical, mental and social development. Associated consequences also may include academic and occupational troubles and involvement with the police because of fighting, property destruction, or other violent acts. About half of all deaths of drivers in motor vehicle accidents are related to alcohol use.

Alcohol use is widespread in our society among adults as well as teens. Youth must contend with mixed messages from adults and the media regarding the social acceptability of alcohol use. "Our society considers the use of alcohol socially acceptable. It should not surprise us that the majority of our adolescent population consumes alcohol . . . usually motivated by the same reasons provided for most adult drinking."[18] Patterns of drinking among teenagers closely reflect similar behaviors of the adults around them. The gender of a teenager also plays a role in the reasons they drink. Girls are more influenced by peer pressure in alcohol use, and are thus more likely to drink to fit in with friends. Boys report other reasons for their drinking and later find groups that include drinkers.[19]

Since a peak of 53 percent in 1995, the percent of Vermont students who had at least one drink in the previous 30 days has fallen steadily — to 46 percent in 1999. Thirty-one percent of eighth graders surveyed had consumed alcohol during the 30 days before the survey, down from 35 percent in 1997 and 40 percent in 1995. Forty-six percent of tenth-grade students had one or more alcoholic drink, down from 55 percent in 1997 and 58 percent in 1995. The rate of high school seniors drinking during the 30 days was 60 percent, unchanged from 1997 but was less that the 1995 rate of 65 percent.

In 1999, almost 30 percent of Vermont students reported they engaged in binge drinking in the past 30 days. Twenty-five percent of female students reported binge drinking, compared to 33 percent of males. Binge drinking is defined as having five or more drinks of alcohol within a couple of hours. The rates of binge drinking, by school grade, changed little between 1997 and 1999 surveys, except for tenth-graders, whose rate fell to 28 percent in 1999, from 37 percent in 1997.

Alcohol (30 days)

Percent of students who had used alcohol during the past 30 days.

Supervisory Union (SU) / School District (SD)	Number Surveyed	8th Grade Rate	10th Grade Rate	12th Grade Rate	Total Rate
Addison Central SU	706	24	47	67	44
Addison Northeast SU	523	26	59	73	46
Addison Northwest SU	348	15	35	42	30
Addison-Rutland SU	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Barre SU	945	24	46	56	43
Battenkill Valley SU	184	39	44	69	55
Bennington-Rutland SU	465	29	57	69	55
Blue Mountain	165	24	44	62	38
Burlington Public Schools	964	34	45	58	44
Caledonia Central SU	1894	34	48	64	48
Caledonia North SU	1894	34	48	64	48
Chittenden Central SU	1412	24	45	51	37
Chittenden East SU	978	25	38	49	38
Chittenden South SD	1237	21	39	61	35
Colchester SD	783	30	46	58	45
Dresden SD	715	18	40	70	39
Essex-Caledonia SU	119	*	68	59	65
Essex-North SU	1894	34	48	64	48
Franklin Central SU	1017	36	56	64	52
Franklin Northeast SU	554	41	62	76	58
Franklin Northwest SU	690	35	51	50	44
Franklin West SU	429	32	51	67	46
Hartford SD	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Lamoille North SU	558	24	49	56	41
Lamoille South SU	587	26	58	75	49
Milton SD	513	32	35	42	35
Montpelier SD	441	26	35	59	42
Orange East SU	416	36	40	55	44
Orange North SU	219	39	40	54	44

Supervisory Union/School District	Number Surveyed	8th Grade Rate	10th Grade Rate	12th Grade Rate	Total Rate
Orange Southwest SU	373	39	42	52	42
Orange-Windsor SU	209	27	32	49	37
Orleans Central SU	454	32	38	69	47
Orleans-Essex North SU	284	23	50	38	41
Orleans Southwest SU	1094	31	56	76	53
Rutland Central SU	347	32	48	57	43
Rutland City SD	911	29	51	63	46
Rutland Northeast SU	570	35	62	69	50
Rutland South SU	552	34	33	54	41
Rutland Southwest SU	254	31	59	61	49
Rutland Windsor SU	171	50	69	73	61
South Burlington SD	783	32	57	66	47
Southwest Vermont SU	1282	31	45	59	43
Springfield SD	563	39	49	46	45
St. Johnsbury SD	1894	34	48	64	48
Thetford Academy	264	38	57	63	55
Washington Central SU	540	18	50	58	38
Washington Northeast SU	251	20	55	64	45
Washington South SU	262	30	52	74	46
Washington West SU	600	29	46	61	44
Windham Central SU	275	28	46	68	44
Windham Northeast SU	518	37	44	73	45
Windham Southeast SU	1058	29	51	62	47
Windham Southwest SU	265	48	58	71	50
Windsor Central SU	544	23	36	48	37
Windsor Northwest SU	224	30	60	60	44
Windsor Southeast SU	381	31	55	58	43
Windsor Southwest SU	341	30	57	64	51
Winooski SD	231	21	25	44	30
Vermont	9096	31	46	60	46

*NA: SD or SU did not participate in survey *: Results are not included for grades with fewer than 20 students.*

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Inhalant Use

Inhalant use is the practice of getting high by sniffing common household products, such as cleansers and floor waxes. Only a small percentage of Vermont students regularly use inhalants, but even first-time users risk dangerous health effects or even death. The chemicals in these products are poisonous and can cause severe damage to the brain, cardiac and circulatory systems, nervous system, respiratory system, immune system, and muscular system. Youth who are long-term users of inhalants may experience effects such as short-term memory loss, hearing loss, and permanent brain, bone marrow, liver and kidney damage.

Public awareness campaigns about these health risks may be helping to reduce the practice in Vermont, if national trends are any guide. The National Institute on Drug Abuse reported a third year of decline in 1998 in youth reports of inhalant use during the previous year. The decline followed an increase in 1996 of youth awareness of the high risks associated with inhalant use.[20]

In Vermont, 14 percent of Vermont teens who were in eighth through twelfth grade in 1999 reported they had ever tried inhalants, down from 22 percent in 1997 and 27 percent in 1995.

Most young people who experiment with inhalants first try it before the age of 13, during the same period in which they experience important changes in physical, cognitive and emotional development, thus compounding the long-term effects. In 1999, more students were trying inhalants at an early age than in 1997 — 58 percent before the age of 13 in 1999, compared to 47 percent in 1997.

Ever used inhalants

Percent of students who had ever used inhalants.

Supervisory Union (SU) / School District (SD)	Number Surveyed	8th Grade Rate	10th Grade Rate	12th Grade Rate	Total Rate
Addison Central SU	706	19	14	11	13
Addison Northeast SU	523	18	24	26	18
Addison Northwest SU	348	13	15	16	14
Addison-Rutland SU	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Barre SU	945	11	25	20	20
Battenkill Valley SU	184	7	14	11	13
Bennington-Rutland SU	465	13	14	14	14
Blue Mountain	165	13	48	15	23
Burlington Public Schools	964	20	16	11	15
Caledonia Central SU	1894	28	17	19	20
Caledonia North SU	1894	28	17	19	20
Chittenden Central SU	1412	17	15	13	15
Chittenden East SU	978	21	7	17	14
Chittenden South SD	1237	11	13	22	14
Colchester SD	783	25	15	20	18
Dresden SD	715	12	6	5	7
Essex-Caledonia SU	119	*	15	5	12
Essex-North SU	1894	28	17	19	20
Franklin Central SU	1017	17	20	15	18
Franklin Northeast SU	554	18	19	20	19
Franklin Northwest SU	690	14	20	24	18
Franklin West SU	429	22	18	13	18
Hartford SD	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Lamoille North SU	558	17	18	24	17
Lamoille South SU	587	10	22	20	15
Milton SD	513	27	22	18	21
Montpelier SD	441	23	16	10	17
Orange East SU	416	20	23	17	19
Orange North SU	219	21	24	8	18

Supervisory Union/School District	Number Surveyed	8th Grade Rate	10th Grade Rate	12th Grade Rate	Total Rate
Orange Southwest SU	373	27	17	21	18
Orange-Windsor SU	209	11	11	13	14
Orleans Central SU	454	18	16	13	17
Orleans-Essex North SU	284	21	15	3	16
Orleans Southwest SU	1094	24	14	21	20
Rutland Central SU	347	14	25	16	16
Rutland City SD	911	23	20	23	22
Rutland Northeast SU	570	23	19	20	21
Rutland South SU	552	25	18	17	19
Rutland Southwest SU	254	13	26	31	23
Rutland Windsor SU	171	37	21	5	23
South Burlington SD	783	12	19	18	14
Southwest Vermont SU	1282	26	18	17	20
Springfield SD	563	35	15	11	21
St. Johnsbury SD	1894	28	17	19	20
Thetford Academy	264	17	24	8	17
Washington Central SU	540	8	15	12	10
Washington Northeast SU	251	23	12	16	18
Washington South SU	262	23	27	23	26
Washington West SU	600	15	12	15	13
Windham Central SU	275	20	19	28	20
Windham Northeast SU	518	23	23	30	21
Windham Southeast SU	1058	20	24	27	22
Windham Southwest SU	265	33	23	13	21
Windsor Central SU	544	16	17	17	18
Windsor Northwest SU	224	14	14	24	16
Windsor Southeast SU	381	21	18	24	18
Windsor Southwest SU	341	16	20	27	20
Winooski SD	231	17	16	7	15
Vermont	9096	19	17	17	14

*NA: SD or SU did not participate in survey. *: Results are not included for grades with fewer than 20 students.*

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Sexual Activity

Early sexual activity, specifically intercourse, is associated with a number of problems for young people, including increased risks of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), which include HIV infection, and teenage pregnancy. Young people receive strong messages encouraging sexuality through the media and from peers. Education and health services are critical components of any strategy to reduce teenagers' risks for pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

The 1999 Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey found that 90 percent of students surveyed had received education about HIV or AIDS at school. Although students are educated about risky sexual activities, few Vermont doctors — especially family practitioners — asked teen patients if they were at risk for unwanted pregnancy (22 percent asked) or sexually transmitted diseases (16 percent), according to a 1996 survey of primary care practitioners.[21]

> *Parental and social guidance during... [puberty] often comes after the process has already started, rather than before. Pre-adolescents need information about the physical and emotional changes experienced by girls and boys, as well as information about coping with those changes. ... [T]hey need and want their parents to talk to them about topics such as knowing when a person is ready for sex, coping with pressures to have sex, and how alcohol and drugs affect decisions to have sex.*[22]
>
> - Vermont Health Plan

In 1999, 38 percent of Vermont eighth through twelfth graders reported ever having sexual intercourse. The rate of sexually active students, those who had sexual intercourse in the past three months, was 27 percent. For both measurements, there was little change between 1997 and 1999. Only 62 percent of sexually active students reported using condoms the last time they had sexual intercourse. Condoms also are highly effective in preventing STDs, including HIV and AIDS. Twelve percent of students had not used any form of contraception to prevent pregnancy.

While Vermont youth have lower rates of sexually transmitted diseases than most other states, any incidence of STDs is a concern because they can lead to more chronic illnesses. The most common infections diagnosed in young people are chlamydia, genital herpes, and HPV (human papillomavirus).[23] These diseases affect more young women than young men and most STDs have no symptoms. HPV has been linked to certain forms of cervical cancer. If left untreated, in some cases chlamydia can lead to pelvic inflammatory disease, which in turn can cause infertility in some women as well as health problems for infants. In 1997, the number of new chlamydia cases in Vermont 15-19 year-olds was 161, or a case rate of 382 per 100,000. Improvements in diagnostic tests have resulted in an increase in cases and rates; by 1999, 215 cases were diagnosed, or a case rate of 491 per 100,000. The rate for young women was 14 times that for young men in 1999 — 941 cases per 100,000 female 15-19 year-olds, compared to 62 per 100,000 males of the same age range.[24]

Sex (in past three months)

Percent of students who have had sexual intercourse during the past three months

Supervisory Union (SU) / School District (SD)	Number Surveyed	8th – 10th Grade Rate	11-12th Grade Rate	Total Rate
Addison Central SU	706	16	41	25
Addison Northeast SU	523	17	38	23
Addison Northwest SU	348	9	36	15
Addison-Rutland SU	NA	NA	NA	NA
Barre SU	945	21	41	28
Battenkill Valley SU	184	22	49	31
Bennington-Rutland SU	465	17	39	25
Blue Mountain	165	19	44	24
Burlington Public Schools	964	21	36	26
Caledonia Central SU	1894	21	50	32
Caledonia North SU	1894	21	50	32
Chittenden Central SU	1412	16	35	22
Chittenden East SU	978	14	35	21
Chittenden South SU	1237	10	38	19
Colchester SD	783	16	43	25
Dresden SD	715	5	31	13
Essex-Caledonia SU	119	44	50	46
Essex-North SU	1894	21	50	32
Franklin Central SU	1017	22	52	32
Franklin Northeast SU	554	24	46	33
Franklin Northwest SU	690	24	45	30
Franklin West SU	429	21	42	28
Hartford SD	NA	NA	NA	NA
Lamoille North SU	558	18	44	27
Lamoille South SU	587	23	31	26
Milton SD	513	24	49	32
Montpelier SD	441	16	33	21
Orange East SU	416	23	51	32
Orange North SU	219	20	50	29

Supervisory Union/School District	Number Surveyed	8-10th Grade Rate	11-12th Grade Rate	Total Rate
Orange Southwest SU	373	22	42	27
Orange-Windsor SU	209	20	50	29
Orleans Central SU	454	22	41	29
Orleans-Essex North SU	284	26	39	30
Orleans Southwest SU	1094	20	54	31
Rutland Central SU	347	18	37	24
Rutland City SD	911	24	47	31
Rutland Northeast SU	570	22	39	28
Rutland South SU	552	18	45	28
Rutland Southwest SU	254	22	44	30
Rutland Windsor SU	171	21	38	27
South Burlington SD	783	14	40	22
Southwest Vermont SU	1282	23	49	32
Springfield SD	563	19	40	25
St. Johnsbury SD	1894	21	50	32
Thetford Academy	264	20	48	30
Washington Central SU	540	14	31	18
Washington Northeast SU	251	20	45	30
Washington South SU	262	20	43	26
Washington West SU	600	19	48	27
Windham Central SU	275	17	34	21
Windham Northeast SU	518	27	51	34
Windham Southeast SU	1058	18	47	27
Windham Southwest SU	265	19	38	24
Windsor Central SU	544	15	38	23
Windsor Northwest SU	224	17	52	29
Windsor Southeast SU	381	22	46	29
Windsor Southwest SU	341	21	57	32
Winooski SD	231	23	59	34
Vermont	9096	19	42	27

NA: SD or SU did not participate in survey.

1999 Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey

Estimated Cohort Graduation Rate

The conventional way to monitor school completion is to provide annual dropout and graduation numbers and rates. These offer a "snapshot" in time. To try to see the bigger picture — a more realistic gauge of how many students who begin as freshman actually graduate from high school — a few states are looking at an entire class of students (known as a cohort) during all four years of high school. Vermont is one of the states using cumulative numbers of dropouts to calculate estimated cohort graduation rates. In the table presented here, the Vermont Department of Education used the average of the classes of 1999 and 2000. (For more information about the method of calculating these rates, see Statistics & Methodology, in the Appendix.)

While these estimated rates have some limitations — they do not include dropouts who later reenroll in the same or another school, for example — they are close enough estimates to highlight a more accurate picture of high school completion.

The results show significantly lower graduation rates than are portrayed in single-year rates. This means that a larger percentage of students are leaving school — and these students may need additional services to meet their needs. The estimated Vermont high school cohort graduation rate (1999 and 2000) was 81 percent, significantly lower than the annual graduation rate for the school year 1999-2000, for example, which was 91 percent.[25] Of the 65 high schools for which estimated rates were calculated, estimated cohort graduation rates ranged from 90 percent or more (ten schools) to less than 70 percent (four schools). (Four schools' rates were not included because their graduating classes were under 25 students, too small to provide reliable rates.)

Causes of dropping out

Most Vermont students graduate from high school on time. For the small percent of students who do not finish school, dropping out is not a simple act but a process. Teens drop out of school for any number of personal, academic, and social reasons. Some factors that increase the risks of dropping out include poverty, poor academic performance in school, problems at home, substance abuse, and teen pregnancy.

Poverty is associated with some of these factors. Low-income kids tend to have more illnesses, which causes more missed school days; hungry children are less likely to concentrate on school work — poor nutrition is linked to problems in cognitive development.

The cumulative results of impaired health and nutrition, fewer learning opportunities at home, family distress leading to emotional and behavioral problems, lack of appropriate schooling, and other disadvantages can be seen in every area of poor children's learning and education.[26]

- Wasting America's Future

The social and economic effects of dropping out of school can be dismal. High school graduates earn 42 percent more than students who do not complete school.[27] Dropouts tend to believe that they are not valued by society and that they do not have control over their lives.[28]

National research has found that dropout prevention programs are most successful when they focus on sixth through eighth-grade youth, provide alternative educational settings separate from regular schools, and maintain low student-teacher ratios that allow additional attention and positive feedback for students.[29]

Estimated Cohort Graduation Rates

Percent of students who graduated from high school

Location of School	Name of School	Average 9-12 Enrollment†† (1999 and 2000)	Estimated Cohort Graduation Rate (1999 and 2000)
Arlington	Arlington Memorial HS	184	82
Barre	Spaulding HSUD #41	1,014	90
Barton	Lake Region UHSD #24	437	87
Bennington	Mt. Anthony Sr. UHSD #14	1,294	76
Bethel	Whitcomb Jr./Sr. HS	130	89
Bradford	Oxbow UHSD #30	420	81
Brandon	Otter Valley UHSD #8	498	82
Brattleboro	Brattleboro Sr. UHSD #6	1,075	77
Bristol	Mount Abraham UHSD #28	581	77
Burlington	Burlington Sr. HS	1,068	67
Cabot	Cabot School	90	93
Canaan	Canaan Schools	119	81
Chelsea	Chelsea High School	164	79
Chester	Green Mountain UHSD #35	305	87
Clarendon	Mill River USD #40	543	86
Colchester	Colchester High School	735	90
Concord	Concord Schools	84	†
Craftsbury	Craftsbury Schools	74	†
Danville	Danville Schools	154	87
Duxbury	Harwood UHSD #19	611	89
East Montpelier	U-32 High School	572	79
Enosburg Falls	Enosburg Senior High School	386	72
Essex Junction	Essex Junction High School	1,453	89
Fair Haven	Fair Haven UHSD #16	644	90
Fairfax	Bellows Free Academy	365	83
Hardwick	Hazen UHSD #26	270	88
Hartford	Hartford High School	758	83
Hinesburg	Champlain Valley UHSD #15	1,152	86
Hyde Park	Lamoille UHSD #18	556	76
Jericho	Mt. Mansfield USD #17	934	88
Ludlow	Black River USD #39	193	80
Lyndon Center	Lyndon Institute	649	78
Manchester	Burr & Burton Seminary	470	96
Marshfield	Twinfield USD #33	162	90
Middlebury	Middlebury Sr. UHSD #3	752	85
Milton	Milton Junior-Senior HS	550	81
Montpelier	Montpelier High School	481	85
Morrisville	Peoples Academy	352	79
Newport	North Country Sr UHSD #22	1,072	77
Northfield	Northfield Jr./Sr. HS	304	77
Poultney	Poultney High School	281	93
Proctor	Proctor Jr./Sr. HS	137	91
Randolph	Randolph UHSD #2	442	79
Richford	Richford High School	163	68
Rochester	Rochester High School	87	†
Rockingham	Bellows Falls UHSD #27	540	68
Royalton	South Royalton High School	179	88
Rutland	Rutland Senior High School	1,048	83
St. Albans	Bellows Free Academy	1,032	73
St. Johnsbury	St. Johnsbury Academy	923	79
South Burlington	South Burlington High School	858	84
Springfield	Springfield High School	620	81
Stowe	Stowe Jr./Sr. High School	219	94
Swanton	Missisquoi Valley UHSD #7	724	78
Thetford	Thetford Academy	267	94
Townshend	Leland & Gray UHSD #34	269	86
Vergennes	Vergennes UHSD #5	393	86
Wells River	Blue Mountain UHSD #21	165	81
West Rutland	West Rutland School	144	78
Whitingham	Whitingham School	103	†
Williamstown	Williamstown Middle/HS	185	86
Wilmington	Wilmington High School	186	82
Windsor	Windsor High School	342	83
Winooski	Winooski High School	212	65
Woodstock	Woodstock Sr. UHSD #4	493	88
Vermont	Vermont	31,305	81

†: School District had too few students to provide reliable rate. ††: Enrollment is shown for reference only; it is not used to calculate rates.

Vermont Department of Education, 2001.

Involvement with the Juvenile Justice System

Young people who are charged with breaking the law may be referred to either Family or Criminal Court. The bulk of charges filed against juveniles are for delinquent acts, which are heard in Family Court. The outcome of cases can range from diversion, reparative probation, fines, probation, and prison sentences. Until recently, research and services relating to delinquent youth had been reactive and problem-focused. A positive youth development approach regards crime and delinquency rates as the social consequences of not meeting the developmental needs of all youth.

Overall, the *number* of juvenile delinquency cases filed annually increased by over 57 percent during the past decade.[30] Between Fiscal Years 1990* and 2000*, average annual delinquency cases rose from 1,098 to 1,728. Case *rates* also rose, by 31.6 percent, from 19 cases per 1,000 youth aged 10-17 in FY 1990, to 25 cases per 1,000 in FY 2000. To put these statistics in perspective, Vermont's rate is less than one-half the national delinquency case rate. For 1997, the most recent year that data are available, the national delinquency case rate was 61.6 cases per 1,000 youth compared to 23.2 cases per 1,000 youth in Vermont.[31]

According to the 1999 Vermont Juvenile Justice Sourcebook, there were 1,757 delinquency cases filed in fiscal year 1999 against 1,247 youths ages 10-17.[32] The Vermont delinquency case rate was 25.3 cases per 1,000 youths. The highest delinquency filing rates were against fifteen year-olds, while the highest rates of *criminal* charges were filed against 18 year-olds.

In FY 1999, the most common delinquency charges for young people between the ages of 10 and 15 were for shoplifting, unlawful mischief, simple assault and petty larceny. By category, 45 percent of delinquency charges were for property offenses, 22 percent were for violent offenses, 14 percent for drug offenses, and 10 percent for public order offenses. The remaining nine percent of changes were for motor vehicle, vs. justice (false alarms, contempt of court, impeding arrest, etc.), and other offenses.

Note: For the purposes of this report, FY 1990 and FY 2000 each represent the average of three years of cases. FY 1990 = FY 1988-1990 and FY 2000 = FY 1998-2000.

CONCLUSION

What do adults remember most about their youth? Unless they have remarkable memories, it probably isn't the complete Table of Chemical Elements, past imperfect forms of French verbs, or all the U.S. vice presidents. Instead, many people have stories about how a parent or other relative encouraged them to discover their own unique talents, believed in them when no one else did, or helped them through a rocky social period. Other adults remember a special teacher or youth leader who made them feel as though they were most important person in the world. Or they credit a certain class for the discovery of a lifelong passion, or a neighbor who treated them and their friends with respect.

These kinds of people and experiences helped us create our own network of external supports and internal strengths. And it is that kind of environment that positive youth development fosters on a broader community level, reaching all kids. And it is that environment that this report hopes to promote.

At the beginning of this report, we laid out its purposes: We wanted to change the question of "What's wrong with youth?" to "What are we doing right for kids, as caregivers and community members?" We also wanted to place youth issues within the context of societal issues. Above all, *Youth Count: the Vermont Youth Report* should help to expand the discussion by using the concept of positive youth development.

With those perspectives in mind, how are Vermont's youth doing? As measured by the statistics in this report, most young people are engaged in learning, involved in youth programs, able to understand their responsibilities, and have parents who ask them about school. Most youth do not smoke, use inhalants to get high, or get in trouble with the law. And often, they manage to attain these assets without having adult role models and while not feeling valued by their communities.

Less than 50 percent of eighth and twelfth-graders reported having "interpersonal competency" and "other responsible adults" in their lives, and slightly over 50 percent of young women and less than 50 percent of young men reported having a sense of self esteem.

It is clear from just a sampling of developmental asset data that while most young people are not addicts or delinquents — they are functioning members of their communities — neither are they "fully prepared for adulthood." The strong message is that most young people need more extensive and ongoing encouragement from adults.

Adult Perceptions and Roles

Perhaps one "solution" to the youth "problem" is to reorient adults' perceptions of youth and their needs to what truly is happening — less a youth "problem" than a symptom of inadequate role models and community support.

Behind the rhetoric of "bad teens" is a contradiction in our attitudes. If we think children and youth today have fewer values, that they don't respect adults, or are less involved in their communities, the reason may be the examples that adults set for them. Adults questioned for the "Grading Grown-Ups" survey tell us a lot about how far our actions match our beliefs:[33]

- 90 percent surveyed agreed it is important for adults to encourage success in school — but only 36 percent of adults follow through.
- 75 percent surveyed say they believe it is important to have meaningful conversations with kids — but only 34 percent actually have such talks.
- 65 percent also agreed that it is important for adults to report positive behavior in youth — but only 22 percent give this kind of positive feedback.

Only one in six adults believes that "youth share their moral and ethical values, such as honesty and hard work."[34] But when youth are asked *their* opinions about values, a different picture emerges. When questioned in a national survey, participants chose as their most important values "being honest," "working hard," "being a good student," and "giving time to helping others."[35]

The sum of this kind of research shows how unproductive — and misleading — it is to continue the blame game. That's the point of positive youth development. And the merits of building up youth strengths and community resources are demonstrated by the proven value of developmental assets.

For example, Vermont students with at least 21 out of 40 developmental assets (39 percent) reported having engaged in fewer than three risk-taking behaviors. The 18 percent of students with 10 or fewer assets had been involved in over nine risk-taking behaviors.

Expanding data and involving youth

If we truly want to reframe the debate about youth in positive youth development terms, we need to create more and better ways of measuring the contributions of youth and the depth of community supports. Efforts in this direction include the expansion of the Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey to include questions related to youth assets, such as service to community.

The very people who are being studied, surveyed, and written about are rarely involved in the discussions about their lives. In Vermont, some schools have taken the initiative to involve young people in analyzing and responding to local statistics about kids. Schools also have helped youth join efforts to create solutions for community issues. This kind of inclusion of young people needs to become a part of every community.

Policy considerations

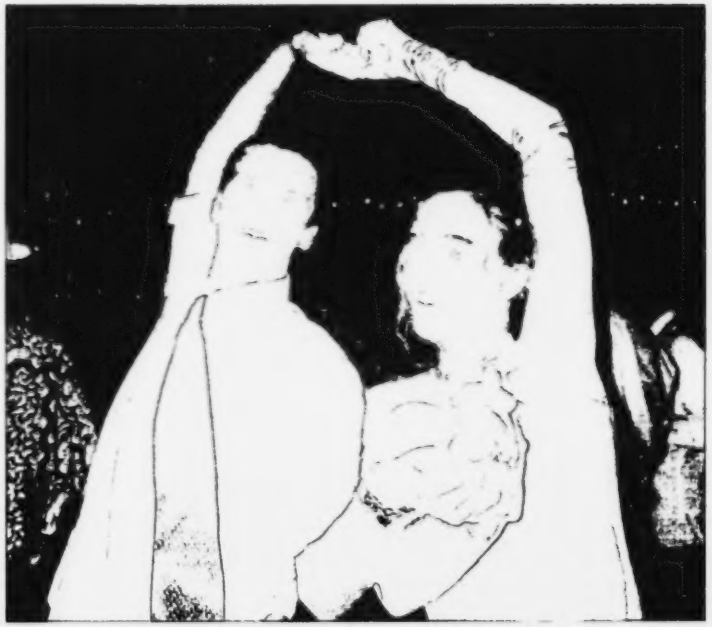
Beyond the collection of data, another challenge will be to integrate the concept of positive youth development into state youth policies. Many lawmakers acknowledge the importance of early childhood education and services in making a difference for children's future. Legislators have made investments in early childhood services in legislation and some funding. This kind of commitment to young people must not be abandoned as children grow up. Teens and pre-teens have fewer advocates for their developmental needs. For that reason, the Vermont Children's Forum will be collaborating with youth workers, advocates, other organizations, and students to create the "Youth Count Campaign" so that youth and the issues that affect them may have a stronger voice in the State House.

As this report underscores, youth risk behaviors do not occur in a vacuum — adult behavior and influence, community institutions, and larger societal problems, such as poverty, play key roles in young people's success or failure. Policy makers must recognize this, and work to improve children's economic status, encourage community development that improves youth resources, and adequately fund youth programs and services.

Vermont has a unique opportunity to build on its successes as a leader in early childhood policy, affordable health insurance, and regional service partnerships. Because of its small size, the strength of its rural communities, and its accessible legislature, Vermont can create the kind of positive supports needed throughout childhood.

We urge interested citizens, local organizations, students, and municipal leaders to use the *Vermont Youth Report* as a springboard to spur creative planning and community actions to improve the lives of young people.

APPENDIX



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Supervisory Unions and/or School Districts Participating in the 1998 Vt. YRBS

Addison Central SU
- Middlebury Union High School
- Middlebury Union Jr. High School
- Bridport Central School

Addison Northeast SU
- Mt. Abraham Union High School

Addison Northwest SU
- Vergennes Union High School

Barre SU
- Spaulding High School
- Barre City Middle School
- Barre Town Elementary School

Battenkill Valley SU
- Arlington Memorial High School

Manchester Area, including Bennington-Rutland SU
- Burr & Burton Seminary*
- Dorset Elementary School
- Manchester Elementary School

Blue Mountain SD
- Blue Mountain Union School

Burlington Public Schools
- Burlington High School
- ONTOP Program
- Hunt Middle School
- Edmunds Middle School

Caledonia Central SU
- Danville School
- Barnet Elementary School
- Walden School

Lyndon Area, including Caledonia North SU
- Lyndon Institute*
- Burke Schools
- East Haven River School
- Lyndon Town School
- Newark School
- Sutton Village School
- Millers Run School

Chittenden Central SU
(includes Essex Town SD results)
- Essex Community Ed. Center UHS
- Albert D. Lawton School
- Westford Elementary School
- Essex Middle School

Chittenden East SU
- Mt. Mansfield Union High School
- Browns River Middle School
- Camels Hump Middle School

Chittenden South SU
- Champlain Valley Union High School
- Charlotte Central School
- Sherburne Community School
- Hinesburg Community School
- Williston Schools

Colchester SD
- Colchester High School
- Colchester Middle School

Dresden SD
- Hanover High School
- Frances C. Richmond Middle School

Essex-Caledonia SU
- Concord Graded & High School
- Lunenburg & Gilman Schools
- Waterford Elementary School

Essex North SU
- Canaan Schools

Franklin Central SU
- St. Albans Town Educational Center
- St. Albans City Elementary School
- Fairfield Center School
- Bellows Free Academy-St. Albans*

Franklin Northeast SU
- Enosburg High School
- Richford High School
- Bakersfield Elementary School
- Montgomery Elementary School

Franklin Northwest SU
(Includes Grand Isle SU results)
- Missisquoi Valley Union High School
- Alburg Elementary School
- Folsom Education & Community Center
- N. Hero Elementary School
- Grand Isle School

Franklin West SU
- Bellows Free Academy-Fairfax
- Georgia Middle School

Lamoille North SU
- Lamoille Union High School

Lamoille South SU
- Peoples Academy
- Stowe Middle/High School

Milton Town SD
- Milton Jr./Sr. High School

Montpelier SD
- Montpelier High School
- Main Street Middle School

Orange East SU
- Oxbow High School
- Fairlee School

Orange North SU
- Williamstown Middle/High School
- Washington Village School
- Orange Center School

Orange Southwest SU
- Randolph Union High School

Orange-Windsor SU
- South Royalton School
- Newton Elementary School

Orleans Central
- Lake Region Union High School
- Albany Community School
- Barton Academy and Graded School
- Glover Community School
- Irasburg Village School
- Orleans Elementary School

Orleans-Essex North SU
- North Country Union Sr. High School
- Brighton Elementary School
- Charleston Elementary School
- Coventry Elementary School
- Newport Town School
- Troy Elementary School
- North Country Union Jr. High School
- Lowell Village School

Orleans Southwest SU
- Hazen Union

Rutland Central SU
- W. Rutland School
- Proctor Jr./Sr. High School
- Rutland Town School

Supervisory Unions and/or School Districts Participating in the 1998 Vt. YRBS

Rutland City SD
Rutland High School
Rutland Middle School
Success School

Rutland Northeast SU
Otter Valley Union High School
Barstow Memorial School

Rutland South SU
Mill River Union High School

Rutland Southwest SU
Poultney High School

Rutland Windsor SU
Black River Union High School

S. Burlington SD
S. Burlington High School
F. H. Tuttle Middle School

Southwest Vermont SU
Mt. Anthony High School
Mt. Anthony Middle School

Springfield SD
Springfield High School
Riverside Middle School

St. Johnsbury SD
St. Johnsbury Academy*
St. Johnsbury Middle School

Thetford
Thetford Academy*

Washington Central SU
U-32 Jr./Sr. High School

Washington Northeast SU
Twinfield Union School
Cabot School

Washington South SU
Northfield Middle/High School

Washington West SU
Harwood Union High School
Crossett Brook Middle School

Windham Central SU
Leland & Gray Union High School
Marlboro Elementary School

Windham Northeast SU
Bellows Falls Union High School
Bellows Falls Middle School

Windham Southeast SU
Brattleboro Union High School
Brattleboro Area Middle School
Putney Central School
Dummerston Schools
Guilford Central School

Windham Southwest SU
Whitingham School
Wilmington Middle/High School
Readsboro Elementary School
Halifax School
Stamford Elementary School

Windsor Central SU
Woodstock Jr./Sr. Union High School

Windsor Northwest SU
Rochester Schools
Whitcomb Jr./Sr. High School

Windsor Southeast SU
Windsor High School
Hartland Elem School
Weathersfield Middle School

Windsor Southwest SU
Green Mountain Union High School
Flood Brook Union School

Winooski SD
Winooski Middle/High School

**Indicates independent school.*
Note: The results from some independent schools have been included in results for area supervisory unions.

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Notes on Statistics and Methodology

Estimated High School Graduation Rates, by High School (1999 and 2000)

The graduation rates used in this Youth Report are estimated cohort graduation rates, downloaded from the Vermont Department of Education website:
http://www.state.vt.us/educ/reports/grad_rates/rpt_99_00_EstCohort_1Page2.html.

The following explanation is excerpted from the website:

"The Estimated High School Graduation Rate is calculated by dividing the total number of 1999 and 2000 graduates by the total number of 1999 and 2000 graduates plus the cumulative number of dropouts (over four years) for the Classes of 1999 and 2000:
[(99Grad+00Grad/(99Grad+00Grad+99Drop+00Drop)]

The Estimated High School Graduation Rate cannot account for students who may drop out and re-enroll in either the same school or another school the following year. The rate also includes both graduates and dropouts who may not have been part of the original cohort that started in the school in ninth grade. Given these and other limitations, high schools are encouraged to use their local student tracking systems to further research their cohort graduation rates."

According to VDE staff, even if the cohort graduation rate estimates had a margin of error of 5-7 percent, for example, the estimates would still show lower graduation rates than are provided in annual graduation reports.

Juvenile Justice Data

The source of juvenile justice data was the 1999 and 2001 Juvenile Justice Sourcebooks, which were published by the Vermont Center for Justice Research.

The Vermont Children's Forum calculated case rates using data on juvenile delinquency cases and Vermont Health Department population estimates. The number of juvenile delinquency cases for youth ages 10-17 represents an average of three years. FY 1990 = FY 1988-1990 and FY 2000 = FY 1998-2000. Estimated population numbers for ages 10-17 also represent an average of three years. The juvenile delinquency case rate was calculated by dividing the number of cases by the estimated population, and multiplying by 1,000.

Sexually Transmitted Disease: Rates of Chlamydia Cases

The source for data on the number of chlamydia cases, ages 15-19, was the Vermont Department of Health. Population data were obtained by downloading information from the VDH website. (See endnote for web address.)

Case rates were calculated by dividing the number of chlamydia cases for ages 15-19, for males, females, and the total, by the population of 15-19 year olds, and multiplying by 100,000. The rates, therefore, represent the number of cases per 100,000 youths of the same age.

Vermont Developmental Assets

The source for developmental asset data was *Developmental Assets: A Profile of Your Youth, Vermont Statewide Aggregate Data*, prepared for the Vermont Agency of Human Services by the Search Institute. The following explanation was excerpted from the report:

"The report's findings are based on a combined sample of students in grades 6, 8, 10, and 12 from 81 schools in 31 supervisory unions. The 31 supervisory unions included: Battenkill Valley, Bennington-Rutland, Burlington Public Schools, Caledonia North, Chittenden Central, Chittenden East, Chittenden South, Colchester School District, Dresden School District, Essex North, Essex Town School District, Franklin Central, Franklin Northwest, Franklin West, Grand Isle, Lamoille South, Milton Town School District, Montpelier School District, Orleans-Essex North, Rutland Central, Rutland City School District, Rutland South, Rutland Southwest, South Burlington School District, Washington Northeast, Washington West, Windham Central, Windham Northeast, Windham Southeast, Windsor Northwest, and Windsor Southwest.

Of 11,735 surveys received, 919 (or eight percent) were eliminated for inconsistencies, missing data on 40 or more items, and grades other than those intended to be surveyed. Of 10,816 valid surveys analyzed, 5,228 were of male students, and 5,502 were of female students.

To protect anonymity, if data are available from fewer than 30 students per grade, percentages are reported for combinations of grades (for example, 6th-7th-8th, 9th-10th, and 11th-12th). When the sample sizes at the individual grade levels are 50 youth or less, caution should be used in making comparisons among grades, unless the sample sizes represent the total number of youth in those grades."

1999 Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey

Data from the 1999 Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey were provided by the Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Programs of the Vermont Department of Health. In 1999, 30,563 eighth to twelfth grade Vermont students in 141 high schools (57 supervisory unions) participated in the VYRBS.

For the purposes of this report, a representative sample of Vermont students was surveyed. Twenty-two high schools of varying sizes, along with their associated 30 middle schools, were randomly selected for the state sample (1:3 systemic sample after sorting by enrollments). A survey of this size was required in order to have an error rate of +/- 5% at each of the five grade levels. The overall response rate was 65 percent, for a total of 9,096 high school students. The results were weighted in order to compensate for differences between the sample and the population of all eighth to twelfth grade students in Vermont. The weighting procedure ensures that the sample is representative of the population. This permits us to draw inferences bout the entire student population based on the results of the sample.

Note: Individual supervisory union results were not weighted; therefore, we urge caution when comparing these results with the results of the state sample.

Vermont Children's Forum

P.O. Box 261

Montpelier, VT 05601

802-229-6377

www.childrensforum.org

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